

## From Olaus Magnus to Carl Reinhold Berch: on the background of Swedish marine archaeology and ship archaeology in the history of ideas

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► CARL OLOF CEDERLUND

## From Olaus Magnus to Carl Reinhold Berch

### On the background of Swedish marine archaeology and ship archaeology in the history of ideas

Marine archaeology, also referred to as maritime archaeology, underwater archaeology and ship archaeology, has become an established field of scientific activity throughout the world and is still undergoing expansion in different directions. Its strong connections to the idea of national heritage and its cultural and other values are obvious. This is a characteristic it has in common with general archaeology. As will be seen in this paper, there may well be differences as well as similarities between the ideological concepts behind the two disciplines, general archaeology and marine archaeology.

It is often emphasised that marine archaeology is a new scientific activity. One can see a connection between this assumption and the circumstance that the discipline has developed and is developing hand in hand with the expansion of diving and underwater techniques employed to gain access to previously unattainable submerged cultural resources and remains of many kinds. Behind this coulisse of modernity, there nevertheless lurk the same historical ideas which have existed for centuries. In this paper, I will try to point out and elucidate some of the foundations for the development of naval history and seafaring history in Sweden. These are the historical ideas which created the ideological basis for what is now referred to as marine archaeology – a subject that expanded into an archaeological field in its own right in the course of the twentieth century.

Archaeological sources show that a ship-related historical perspective already existed in the Nordic and Swedish perception of life at quite an early time. It is a clearly visible element in many kinds of evidence of prehistoric times and the Iron Age as well as of the Medieval period. In the first-mentioned period it is visible in different types of pictorial sources, as in the Bronze Age rock carvings in which different ship symbols appear in contexts that are evidently of a ritual character – a form that by nature implies a tradition in action, a historical aspect. One approach to Swedish and Nordic archaeology has been to try to interpret and understand the ideologies underlying and expressed in maritime projections in Nordic rock-carving images of ships. In the Iron Age – to give another example – ships play an important role in the epic and religious depictions on Gotlandic picture stones as a symbol for ritual, in other words of tradition (see for example Ellmers 1995). In the medieval period, the ship concept is quite diversely expressed in originally oral traditions and sagas. This saga material – in which maritime life and ships are of major significance – were in many cases recorded on paper purely for historical reasons. They are motives belonging to a treasure of myths common to all of Nordic society.

This paper does not address a single stream of ideas, but rather a group of concepts growing out of the early perceptions of national history and the historical interests organised and supported

by different groups of society. Among these interest groups we will find the historians and antiquarians depicting the history of the nation, in the process also including its maritime past; the scholars who study and describe folk culture, an occupation with old traditions in Swedish society; representatives of the navy interested in the historical feats of the same and, to mention one other early group of importance in this context, representatives of seafaring and seaborne trade undertaking to write its history.

## Early “marine-archaeological” finds in Sweden

One may discern an introductory phase of marine archaeology in Sweden during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, different kinds of underwater finds begin to appear in the sources and museum collections of the time. Originally, these finds and the activity surrounding them were not defined as results of a marine-archaeological character. This particular concept seems to have first been used in the early twentieth century in Sweden. The first time it appears in writing is, as is well-known, in a paper by an anonymous author in the journal *Sveriges Flotta* (The Navy of Sweden) in 1911.

### Stone-Age and Bronze-Age weapons retrieved from underwater sediments at Forsvik, Västergötland County

Some of the earliest known archaeological finds from underwater environments of Sweden appear to stem from the 1810s, a decade in which the Romanticist movement was developing in several areas of cultural life in Nordic society, also in Sweden. This movement particularly influenced the literary world but also the interest in early history. The “Götiska förbundet” – freely translatable as “The Gothic Union” – a society which set out to encourage interest in the old Goths, was founded in 1811. Its aims were connected with the political regeneration after the revolution of 1809 in Sweden and the hope that the nation would find its way back to its previous grandeur. The literary art and science were seen as means of raising the national consciousness

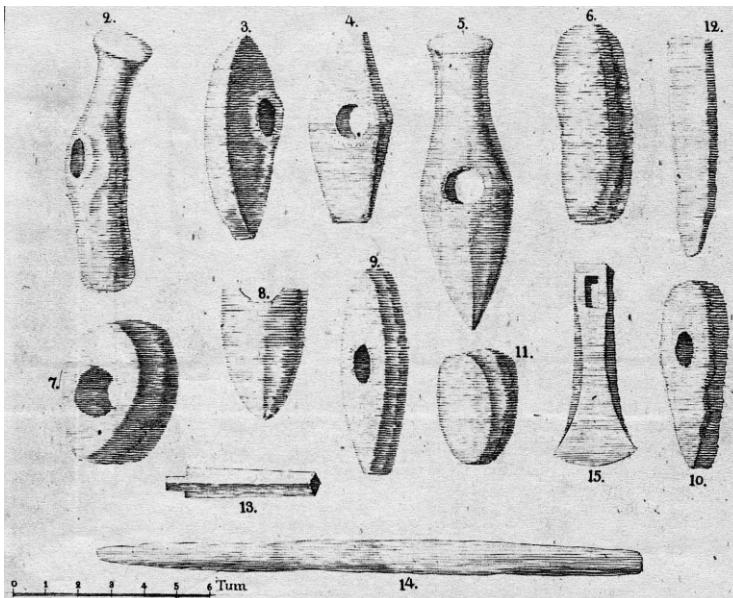


Fig. 1 Top left shows stone and bronze axes and implements found about one metre below the surface in sediments in the Bilströmmen stream at Forsvik in Västergötland as illustrated in the journal *Iduna, en skrift för den nordiska fornålders älskare*, in its issue of 1817.

and spirit. This movement was supported by historians, authors of fiction, poets and other artists (Westholm 1962).

In 1811, the year the “Götiska Förbundet” was founded, it established the journal *Iduna, en skrift för den nordiska fornålderns älskare* (*Iduna, a Journal for Admirers of Nordic Antiquity*). One of the journal’s primary goals was to provide information on prehistory and early history and on finds of different types of archaeological artefacts (Arnshav 2001, p. 2f.).

One case of such finds reported in *Iduna* were those in the sediment beneath a stream called the Bilströmmen near Forsvik in Västergötland County. Several stone axes and one copper or bronze axe – from the late Neolithic period and Bronze Age, as we now know – were dug up there in connection with the deepening of the stream around 1810 (Fig. 1). The artefacts were found in gravel two to four feet below the bottom of the stream, and were published by the archaeological scholars Pehr Tham and Major Jacob Forsell in *Iduna* in 1817 (Arnshav 2001, p. 12).

According to their interpretation, the artefacts in question were weapons produced in the area, and were contemporary with the occasion when “kämpar” (warriors: a common designation in early literature on warriors of the old times) from Norway and Västergötland passed through the area (according to the authors’ assumption) on their way to support King Ring in the battle against the Danish king Harald Hildetand at Bråvalla in Östergötland County. This battle is mentioned in Saxo and other sources on early Nordic history, and has been presumed to have taken place in the migration period (Tham 1817, p. 182f.; Lindquist 1961).

### The ship finds at Södertälje

The deepening of the Bilströmmen stream at Forsvik was probably connected with the concurrent project of digging the Göta Canal. When it was finished, this canal crossed Sweden from east to west, using lakes, streams and canal sections. Another part of the project was the digging of the canal and lock at Södertälje for passage from the east coast waters to Lake Mälaren, by way of which Stockholm and other harbours on the same lake could be reached. The Södertälje Canal passed through the sediments of a former sound between the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren, and when it was dug during the years 1806–1819, several old boat and ship finds were located in these sediments. The engineer who led the canal excavation work – Eric Nordevall – reported on these finds, among other places, in a paper in the Proceedings of the Royal Military Academy in 1832. In this paper he is especially interested in describing the geological circumstances ascertained during the digging, but also discusses archaeological finds and observations, not only of boat finds. His descriptions of the latter are short and matter-of-fact. He mentions, for example, that some of the ship finds had decorations in the shape of human heads in their bows (Nordevall 1832).

Nothing of the remains of early shipping found back then seem to have been preserved until the present – except for two iron anchors. Nordevall also described these anchors, which have been in the possession of the Swedish National Maritime Museum since about 1950. We can see that both are of a type very similar to the anchors retrieved in connection with the excavation of the Oseberg ship in Norway – about a century after the digging of the Södertälje Canal – objects dated to the Late Iron Age. The Södertälje anchors are considerably larger than the Oseberg anchors. One of the anchors was found as an isolated find in mud layers near Lake Mälaren beneath a large amount of timber, mud and sand. The other anchor was found between two of the old shipwrecks also situated near the Mälaren side of the canal (Webe 1981).

With regard to type and location, the two Södertälje anchors were probably in use in connection with seafaring through the sound at Södertälje before it grounded over around 1000 AD. Although the technician Eric Nordevall described the early ship finds at the Iron Age sound at Södertälje in an explicitly factual way, it is evident that the objects had aroused his interest as well

as that of others working on the canal project. Evidence of this interest is found in several observations recorded in his paper, including remarks on the conditions in which the anchors were found.

In 1832 Eric Nordevall donated other underwater archaeological finds which he had uncovered during excavations for the locks at the Trollhättan Falls in the western part of the Göta Canal to the Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Royal Academy of History and Antiquities). Among these artefacts was a large anchor of the same type as the ones from Södertälje, found at the Trollhättan site. The donation was made in the same year in which Nordevall's paper on the diggings and finds at Södertälje was published (Nordevall 1832). In a post-mortem written by Jacob Berzelius at the academy on March 13, 1832 on the finds donated by Nordevall, it is stated that the anchor from Trollhättan was of the same type as the ones from Södertälje, which at this time were in the possession of the academy (Hildebr. Inv. No. 581). In other words, someone had already delivered the Södertälje anchors to this institution, which bore the responsibility for the care of ancient monuments in Sweden at this time. It is evident that someone had been aware of the archaeological value of these finds of early ship equipment from the sediments at the former sound between the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren at Södertälje; and that the same person or persons had taken the initiative of donating them to the academy. It is not improbable that this person was Eric Nordevall, considering the fact that he had been engaged in the building of the Göta Canal for several decades in a leading position and had also delivered similar antiquities from another site, the one at the Trollhättan Falls, showing his interest and sense of responsibility for the preservation of the same.

It is quite probable that the wooden and other organic remains of the ship finds at Södertälje smouldered due to exposure following their discovery. With all probability, they simply dried out and pulverised. Confirming this speculation, Nordevall described how the adornments in the shape of human heads, found on the stem posts, were so soft or rotten that they completely lost their original shape and smouldered like charcoal. This is a very good description of what happens with old, waterlogged wood when it dries and its cells collapse. The fact that the anchors were saved shows on the other hand that there was an interest in saving the objects not destroyed in this way.

### Early log-boat finds

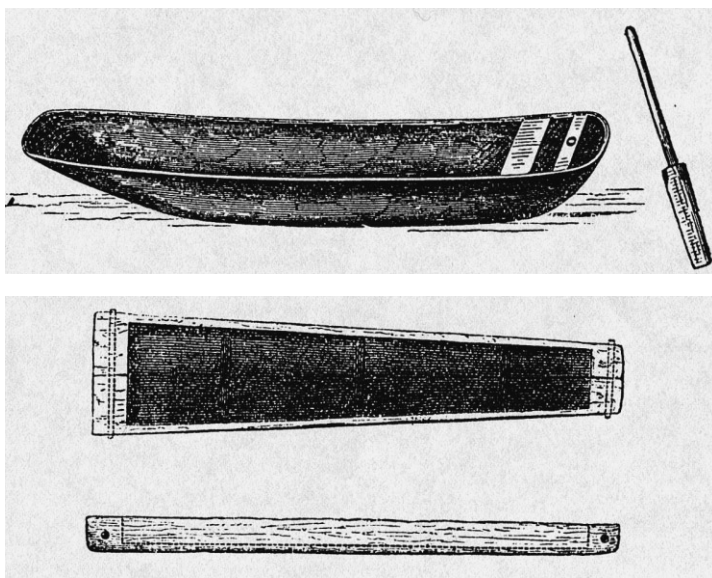
During the nineteenth century, historical and ethnological museum collections were developed in Sweden, both centrally and regionally. Typical objects of such collections were finds of log boats or the remains of such boats found in rivers, lakes or bogs. Finds of this type are presented by several of the scholars interested in and presenting folk culture and the material relics of the same during this century. In his work on the folk culture in the county of Kronoberg in Småland in Southern Sweden, *Wärend och Wirdarne. Ett försök till svensk Ethnologi* (Wärend and the Wirds. An Attempt at Swedish Ethnology), printed in 1868, one of Sweden's earliest ethnologists, Gunnar Olof Hylltén-Cavallius, told of the fishing done by the trolls and warriors of the old times. As examples of vessels used by the former, he cited finds of log boats from different parts of his investigation area. He also illustrated the same subject with engravings of such finds as well as of primitive craft still in use which had been located and stored in the museum collections of the time (Fig. 2). In his text he mentioned among other things the reference made by Olaus Magnus (see below) to the use of log boats in his work *De Nordiska Folkens historia* (The History of the Nordic Peoples) of 1555 (Hylltén-Cavallius 1863-1868, vol. II, p. 47f.).

### The keel of the Swedish man-of-war GÖTHA

At the time of the completion of the excavation work for the Södertälje canal and the publication of the finds from Bilströmmen in *Iduna* – i.e. in the 1810s – another engineer in another part of Sweden made a special kind of donation to Lund University:



Fig. 2 Two engravings in Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius' work on the folk culture in the county of Kronoberg in Småland in Southern Sweden, *Wärend och Wirdarne. Ett försök till svensk Ethnologi*, printed in 1868. The first shows a log boat from the thorp below Jätsberg at Lake Åsnen, the second a "ship" found at Espenäs in Berg parish, both in Kronoberg county in Southern Sweden. The author used the engraving to illustrate the primitive craft used by trolls when fishing in old times.



In June 1817, a lieutenant in the construction corps of the Swedish navy, Carl Daniel Pettersson, donated a piece of wood from the keel of the Swedish man-of-war, the GÖTHA, to the Academy of Lund, in the event that this memory should be found worthy of a place in the historical collections of our nearest academy. According to Pettersson, the reason for the donation was the fact that the vessel had been the first naval ship to be built at the naval base in Karlskrona after the founding of the same in 1680. He further related that it had taken part in the battle against the Danes at Möen in 1710. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the remains of the vessel were lying off the shore near the civilian shipyard in Karlskrona, where Pettersson was the master shipwright at the time (Cederlund 1994, p. 60).

This is the first known case of recognition of the material remains of an old naval ship from the era of great power in Swedish history as something of interest from a historical perspective and worthy of preservation in a museum. This is an interest which began to spread in the mid nineteenth century when the use of the heavy diving suit was introduced in the Swedish navy as well as in private salvaging companies. Beginning in the 1840s, particularly within the navy diving units in Stockholm and Karlskrona, the first attempts were made to salvage parts of and equipment from wrecks of naval ships, above all ones of the seventeenth century. This activity was carried out either with the aim of selling the objects to interested parties or donating them to museums or other official institutions. One primary motive for this activity was to commemorate heroic feats in connection with the old naval ships in the history of the navy. Another was the commercial aspect. Along with objects from the ships' equipment, timbers were salvaged from the wrecks to be sold as "black oak" from which furniture or souvenirs were manufactured. Guns from the wrecks were especially treasured finds (Cederlund 1994).

One old naval shipwreck repeatedly subject to such salvaging, probably as early as the 1840s, was the wreck of the RIKSÄPPEL found at Dalarö in the Stockholm Archipelago in 1676. In the 1860s several salvage operations were carried out on this wreck, retrieving – among other things – old guns and one of the ship's anchors. The former were donated to the Ethnographical Collections in Stockholm, later to become the Nordiska Museet and Skansen, where they are housed today (Cederlund 1994, p. 56). The anchor was brought to Stockholm to be exhibited on a raft in the harbour (Ny Illustrerad Tidning 1868).

## Maritime perspectives in the early historiography of Sweden

Interest in the history of archaeology has been growing in Sweden, as manifested recently by the doctoral dissertation by Ola W. Jensen, *Forntid i historien. En arkeologihistorisk studie av synen på forntid och forntida lämningar, från medeltiden till och med förupplysningen* (The past in history. A study of the perception of antiquity and antiquities from the Medieval period to the mid eighteenth century, Jensen 2002).

In this and other works, Jensen has shown how the early Nordic perception of prehistory had its basis in the interest in the history of the Goths, formulated and presented during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how this older phase of the Gothic movement (Swedish: *Göticismen*) in turn referred to and had its origins in tales of the Old Testament. According to the sixteenth-century Swedish historian Johannes Magnus, the Swedish kingdom could be traced back to the grandson of Noah, Magog, who – according to Magnus – was the first Swedish king. Johannes Magnus describes an imaginary line of descent of the Swedish kingdom. According to this perception of Swedish history, the early kings were also the leaders of the migration of the Goths from Scandinavia to Europe, which finally led to the downfall of the Roman Empire. One of these imaginary Swedish kings, Berik, started the immigration of the Goths from the Scandinavian Peninsula towards the continent, while also leading successful naval battles (Eriksson 2001, p. 11f.).

In other words, according to this perspective on history, the whole of European culture stemmed from the Scandinavian Peninsula. This tenet was a basic element of the conception of history in the growing Swedish nation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One motive behind this dream of greatness was the ideological support of the Swedish expansion in Europe during the same period. In this conception of history, which was much more complex than the account of it given here, the idea of the importance of the navy in early Swedish history was also present. This information is interesting in our case, as it proves to contain ideas which have prevailed both in historical descriptions and in the general consciousness from the sixteenth century to the present.

During the past years, the early interest in the maritime past of the Nordic society has been subject to several studies. Cederlund analysed the ideologies behind the interest in wrecks of old naval ships in a paper of 1994 (*The Regal Ships and Divine Kingdom*) and returned to the subject as part of the background of Swedish marine archaeology in *Nationalism eller vetenskap? Svensk marinarkeologi i ideologisk belysning* (Nationalism or science? Swedish marine archaeology in an ideological perspective, Cederlund 1994 and 1997). In an examination paper of 1997 at Södertörns Högskola (University College), *Ledungen och det nationella projektet* (The ledung and the national project), Jonas Kistner analysed the historical and archaeological interest in the “ledung” – the early Nordic navy organisation – from the perspective of nationalistic historiography (Kistner 1997). In 1999 Marcus Lindström published a paper with the title *Sjöförsvaret i den svenska historieskrivningen* (Sea defence in Swedish historiography) in which this subject is taken up and further advanced (Lindström 1999). In 2001, in another examination paper at the same University College – *Sjökriget, fartygen och flottan i göticistisk tanke och historieskrivning. En arkeologihistoria med sjökrigshistorisk inriktning* (Naval warfare, the ships and the navy in thought and historiography in the Gothic movement. Archaeological history in the perspective of naval history) – Niklas Eriksson analyses the development of the historical and antiquarian conceptions of the navy in the world of historical ideas concerning the old Goths (“Göticismen”) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Sweden (Eriksson 2001).

## The Gothic movement as a basis of Swedish history

The early Gothic movement took its inspiration not only from the bible but also from Nordic sagas and the hero mysticism apparent in the same, as well as from the medieval chronicles in which the Goths were hailed as important historical symbols. As is described in the following, in the sixteenth century the two Magnus brothers, Johannes and Olaus, formulated the role of the Goths in early Swedish history. This ideology reached its peak in the historiography of the seventeenth century, particularly in the works of Olof Rudbeck the Elder (1630-1702) at Uppsala University, and above all in his very extensive historical work on the origin of the Swedish nation, *Atlantica*, written in several volumes in the last part of the seventeenth century (Rudbeck 1915-1950).

Especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a central theme in the stream of ideas revolving around the role of the Goths and the grand past of the Swedish nation was the collection and publication of medieval hand-written documents and saga texts telling about the energetic and grand character of the early Northerners. Following a period of lesser interest during the Period of Liberty in the eighteenth century, the Gothic movement rose to a new peak in the latter decades of the same century. This is the beginning of the period of Romanticism, a movement that continued and came to be of great importance in cultural life during the nineteenth century (Mjöberg 1967/68). Any reader interested in this phenomenon, if he takes a closer look at the present, will find that the messages of Romanticism dwelt upon here – as they were developed about two hundred years ago – are still present in many shapes in Nordic society.

It is through Romanticism that a successor to the Gothic hero concept, the Viking, took shape and began to influence the popular imagination, as it was projected through fiction, poetry, art and theatre. The symbolic figure of the Viking which emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century has become an idol with a prominent role in Nordic history. The role of the Viking was connected to the imagined ancestors' maritime life in the past, life at sea and brave feats, in a manner quite similar to the depiction of the Gothic heroes by the old historians.

Viking idolatry became a special, Nordic historical theme as it upheld the Viking and his travels and tools – for example the Viking ship – in several different connections in historical presentations. This is historical symbolism which is quite evident and easy to trace back into the eighteenth century and in the historical works of this time. It is still very much alive today, for example in Nordic ship archaeology (Cederlund 1998).

## The Swedish navy in the historiography of the sixteenth century

The early ideas and the historical conception of the roles of the Goths in early Swedish history were first formulated by the Swedish Catholic archbishop Johannes Magnus in his work *Historia de omnibus gothorum sveonum que regibus* of 1554, which in 1620 was also published in Swedish under the title *Swea och Göta Crönica* (The Chronicle of the Svea and Göta Peoples). This work mirrors Medieval ideas about the origin of the Goths in Scandinavia, and also presents a genealogical line of descent of Swedish kings with a start in the world of the Old Testament as mentioned above.

Johannes Magnus' message concerning the role of the Goths in early Swedish history was reinforced by the extensive work of this brother, Olaus Magnus, (*Historia de gentibus sententionalibus*; in Swedish *Historia om de Nordiska Folken* [History of the Nordic Peoples], Magnus 1555). This work was also published in Rome, where the two brothers lived as refugees from the Protestant ruler of Sweden at the time, King Gustav Vasa. The work also conveyed images and conceptions of the role of the Goths in early Swedish society. It is above all a broad description of



Nordic society, life and culture, also with an emphasis on traditional traits of the same, and with in-depth descriptions of the Nordic art of warfare, both on land and at sea.

Both Magnus brothers described the Swedish navy and sea defence and its history, thus producing the first discussions of Swedish naval history. King Berik, the fourteenth of the imaginary Swedish kings, who had an eminent place in Swedish historiography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was described as a successful hero at sea and leader of naval battles (Eriksson 2001, p. 10f.). It was also depicted how the Goths manned their ships to sail out on the Baltic Sea to conquer their enemies during their invasion of Europe (Lindström 1999, p. 56).

## The Carta Marina and its images of Nordic maritime life and culture

In as early as 1539, Olaus Magnus already published a map of the Scandinavian Peninsula, the "Carta Marina" which, along with the geographical aspect, also strongly emphasises the maritime aspect of the area, partly through the name of the map itself, and partly through the many details in the map illustrating Nordic maritime life.

The Carta Marina would serve as an excellent basis for an analysis of maritime life and culture as mirrored by Olaus Magnus (Fig. 3). The map is characterised by the presence of the sea around the Scandinavian Peninsula, its very long stretched shores and many lakes and rivers, as well as the many maritime features of the landscape as it is depicted.

Olaus Magnus depicted the sea as a dominant and a detailed part of the map. He filled it with sea monsters, whales and different types of ships and maritime activities to emphasise its importance. It would be necessary to carry out a special analysis of the map in order to explain the many different ships depicted in it – many evidently naval vessels – as well as the abundant maritime motifs at sea or on the shore. The maritime activities depicted along the inner waterways are also manifold and detailed.

## Nordic maritime life and culture as presented in Olaus Magnus' *History of the Nordic Peoples*

The extensive historical work by Olaus Magnus published about 15 years after the Carta Marina possesses an encyclopaedic structure and great precision of detail. At the same time, it is evident that the author concentrated on subjects related to power and its enactment in his time, in keeping with the high evaluation of this aspect during the Renaissance. In Magnus' work, the art of warfare, its tools and enactment is therefore given much scope, as are the historical aspects relevant to upholding the importance of the Swedish nation in the past and present. Among these aspects are the natural resources and the use of the same, for example iron and metal production. In the sections of the work which describe maritime life and life at sea and on board ships, one finds that the natural conditions for seafaring and fishing are illustrated. Descriptions and engravings of different kinds of sea defences and methods for the enactment of naval warfare are also common.

Magnus describes an organisation which has been interpreted by twentieth century scholars as the Nordic "ledung," a naval warfare organisation founded on the principle of the members of society carrying out the construction, equipment, manning and use of the ships of the navy in former times (Granlund 1947, p. 23f.; Eriksson 2001, p. 13f.).

Other subjects described by Magnus are shipbuilding, ship types, seafaring, sailing routes, sea marks, fishing, fish trade, seal hunting, whaling, as well as salt production for the preservation of the catches. Several chapters introduce us to the construction and use of different types of vessels, foundering and salvage techniques as well as laws and rules for life at sea and aboard ships.



Fig. 3 Part of Olaus Magnus' "Carta Marina" of 1539 showing a vivid depiction of the maritime culture on the shores and in the coastal waters of the Bothnian Gulf. Coloured adaptation by Antonio Lafreri, 1572, taken from Ulla Ehrensward (et al): *Mare Balticum. 2000 Jahre Geschichte der Ostsee*. Helsinki 1996, p. 94f.

One could call Olaus Magnus the first Swedish ethnologist. In Olaus Magnus' history, one witnesses the introduction of a strong and longstanding tradition of Swedish historiography, namely the presentation and discussion of the folk culture in its many facets. This is a research discipline which has been developed in several phases since the time of Olaus Magnus. It has found particularly strong expression in periods when nationalistic views on history have been expressed, as for example during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, with the renaissance of the interest of the Goths in history and later national Romanticism as a movement in both the literary and historical fields. This interest also formed the basis for the creation of museums presenting material folk culture – including that of maritime significance.

## National symbolism projected by the sculptural adornment of the naval ship VASA

During the seventeenth century, the navy was a strong political and military tool of the Swedish nation. The large Swedish naval ships created obvious symbols of this strength through their size, armament, and the imposing and colourful sculptural adornment of the hulls which was common on the bigger ships of this time, and which conveyed carefully formulated symbolic messages (Cederlund 1994).

This symbolism in sculpture has been preserved more or less completely in one case, namely in the case of the naval ship VASA, which sank in Stockholm Harbour in 1628 and was salvaged in 1961. The reconstruction of the ship's sculptural ornamentation and the interpretation of the same provides detailed insight into the messages that were thus to be conveyed to the surrounding world by the nation's government, of which the king was the central figure. In his work of 1986, Soop states that it is a question of a visual, symbolic programme which aims at promoting the image of the Swedish nation and its leaders as integral elements of European politics and culture. This is done in different ways. One is to illustrate Sweden's right as a European nation, particularly from a historical perspective, by means of sculptural representation of the classical world, mythical and biblical figures as well as those from the Swedish history of the time, for example the Gothic King Berik (Soop 1986, p. 235f.).

The importance of the sculptural programme is not primarily as an ideological manifestation of the importance of naval strength. Rather, it is a manifestation emphasising the role and importance of the Swedish nation and its leader. The victories of King Gustav II Adolf in Europe at this time were seen in correspondence with the feats of battle of the old Gothic kings. According to Soop it is therefore no coincidence that one finds the picture of a Gothic king in the form of King Berik among the symbolic images on the flat stern of the naval ship VASA (Soop 1986, p. 237).

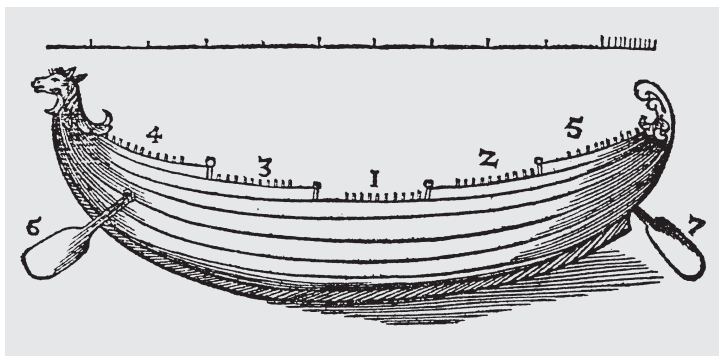
This message is conveyed by means of vivid sculptural adornments on a big naval ship. This is a state of affairs showing that, in the national consciousness, these messages – with their roots in both European and Swedish history – were linked with the big ships of the navy. It is a known fact that the VASA was not by any means the only Swedish naval ship to bear such messages.

## Naval and ship history in the work *Atlantis* by Olof Rudbeck the Elder

In his major work *Atlantis*, Olof Rudbeck the Elder – a professor and the foremost historian at Uppsala University with an orientation towards Gothic historiography in seventeenth-century Sweden – described the Goths as great warriors and seamen. He also provided a description of the Goth navy and its organisation. The story he tells is that of the "ledning" organisation, possibly the very one Olaus Magnus referred to in his description of early Nordic naval matters (see above).



Fig. 4 The illustration of a “femitosessa,” an early Nordic ship type described by Olof Rudbeck the Elder in his work *Atlantica* of the late seventeenth century (Rudbeck 1947, p. 264). Rudbeck used this ship depiction to illustrate how this type of ship was built, used and rowed.



One may state that Rudbeck's description of this phenomenon is very similar to treatments of the same subject by historians and others until well into the twentieth century. Rudbeck also provides an in-depth discussion of how early naval ships were built, how they were rowed, and the names they bore (Fig. 4). His treatment of the subject can be regarded as a historical interest – both general and scientific – which can also be linked to the interest of present-day ship archaeologists for whom these ships are of great significance.

Eriksson has formulated and discussed the question as to whether the *older* ways of reasoning within research of this kind are unconsciously reproduced in presentations of the past and thereby become a kind of *relic*, a kind of unconsciously hidden *baggage* of evaluations which pass from generation to generation of scholars without anyone being conscious of their continuity. He also conducts an interesting discussion of the question as to whether archaeology – be it carried out according to the approach of cultural history, the processual or post-processual school – delivers images of a past which differ from one another in essential aspects. He also questions whether the same schools can emancipate themselves from the basic ideas delivered by the historians who described the role of the Goths in the Nordic and Swedish past more than four hundred years ago. Do not these different schools instead tell the same basic story again and again, merely using new methodological and epistemological arguments (Eriksson 2001, p. 19f.)?

One example of such a constant is perhaps constituted by the historical interest in the *ledung*, what it was composed of, the role it might have played, how it has developed, etc. The way the subject is treated in the twentieth century hardly deviates from how Rudbeck treated it three hundred years earlier (Eriksson 2001, p. 24; Lindström 1999, p. 58f.).

Another example of such a constant provided by Eriksson is the character projected onto material remains with the support of written sources. The concept of the disposition or nature of man in the Nordic past also seems to be something which is constant through time. Even if it is not common to characterise early seamen as great naval warriors by referring to their Gothic origin, as is the case in Rudbeck, the Northerners of the past are often depicted as warriors at sea and heroes. May we perhaps see the Viking as an expression of the same idea as the Goths? As more or less imaginary figures from the past, they are surprisingly alike in both description and deed. The wish for freedom and the gung-ho spirit that the Viking is supposed in various modern contexts to possess may have forerunners in the same qualities of the old Goth (Eriksson 2001, p. 25).

The romantic idea of the Viking that has prevailed in the last couple of hundred years and is today very widespread – being used in a large range of different contexts from archaeological research to marketing and advertising – is basically a product of the later phase of the movement called “Göticismen,” i.e. the interest in the history of the Goths in the Nordic past, initiated at the end of the eighteenth century and still very much alive today.

## The naval history tradition

The easiest-to-study aspect of the early interest in maritime history is that of naval history. This circumstance is due to the fact that the navy emerges from a strong organisation which existed for a long time and whose members had an express interest in the history of their own institution and profession. It is also related to the fact that the organisation had strong motives for spreading knowledge and especially for creating a bias in its own favour, as well as for fostering and training its own younger members in the same historical awareness. The organisation in question is – as the reader will certainly have already guessed – the Swedish navy. The relative ease of studying this organisation's history today is also a consequence of the fact that its members, usually naval officers, have been publishing works concerned with the history of the navy for nearly three hundred years.

These works were often dedicated to the king or to a royal prince under whose protection they were published. One characteristic of these works is that they were often written in popular form – evidently to enlighten the younger members of the navy, particularly cadets and younger officers. Swedish naval history, as it is presented in these works, emphasises the role of the kings in the political and military developments of the nation; the famous sea battles fought by the navy, the heroic roles played in these battles by the officers as well as the naval ships, the adventure and the drama in this part of the nation's past.

In introductions to certain of these historic works, the respective author describes the Vikings and the Viking ships as the predecessors of later naval heroes and naval ships. The Viking is seen here as the forefather of the naval hero of later times. As was usual in early historiography, the Medieval period was seen by these naval historians as a dark period for the Swedish nation. On the other hand, the development which began in the early sixteenth century with the entry of Gustaf Vasa as the first king of the Vasa line is seen as the commencement of a great period for the various branches of the Swedish military, among them the navy.

### Carl Nilsson Bechstadius and his work *Den adelige och Lärde Svenske Sjöman* (The Noble and Learned Swedish Seaman)

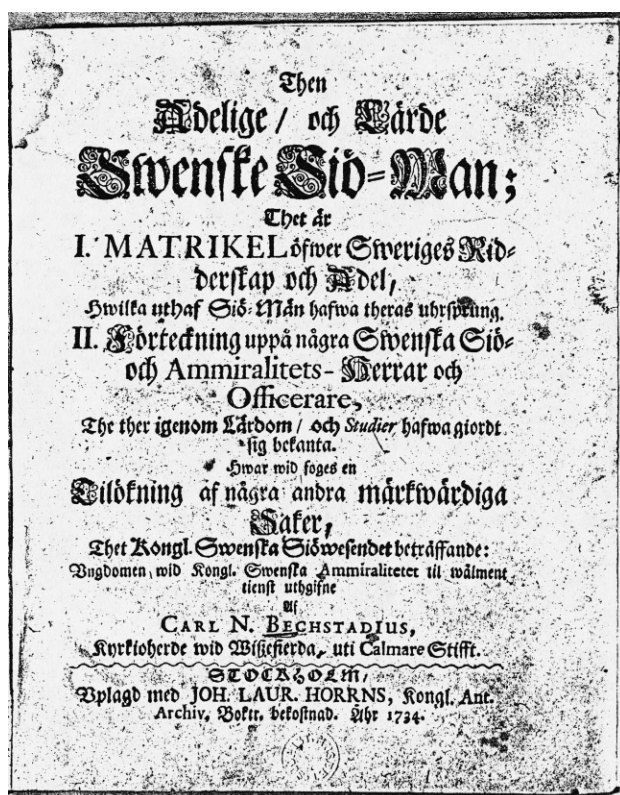
The first printed manifestation of a special tradition of naval history in Sweden seems to be a work published in 1734. It is quite possible that the same historical interest existed before this time, for example as oral tradition in the navy. As has been shown above, all that had been published previously on naval history had been part of general historical works depicting the Swedish nation in a temporal perspective.

The first known of the works of naval history in Sweden is also the most interesting. It was written by a vicar in the Vissefjärda parish in Småland, Carl Nilsson Bechstadius (1690-1739). It was published after having been examined and approved by the admiralty and two naval officers and two officials there. The title of the work in Swedish is: *Then adelige och lärde svenske sjöman; thet är I. MATRIKEL öfwer Sweriges ridderskap och adel, whilka uthaf siö-män hafwa theras uhrsprung. II. Förteckning uppå några svenska siö- och amiralitets-herrar och officerare, the ther igenom lärdom och studier hafwa gjordt sig bekanta* (Bechstadius 1734). (This long title can be freely translated as: The noble and learned seaman, which is I: Calendar over Swedish chivalry and nobility descended from seamen. II. A list of some Swedish seafaring and admiralty gentlemen and officers who have made themselves known there through learnedness and studies.)

Carl Nilsson Bechstadius was a priest in the Swedish navy, stationed at the main naval base in Karlskrona. He had other commitments in the navy and was also a Member of Parliament for the



Fig. 5 The title page of Carl Nilsson Bechstadius' work *Then adelige och lärde svenske siö-man* (The Noble and Learned Swedish Seaman) of 1734. The last section in the book, its title translatable as "Some Notable Events Which Have Happened with Swedish Ships," describes dramatic events in which Swedish naval ships of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were involved, particularly ones which led to the loss of the ships. Some one hundred years later, the wrecks of the same naval ships were to become the sites at which navy divers salvaged boat timbers to sell as "black oak," guns and different kinds of objects from the ship equipment to be made into souvenirs or collectors' items, or to be donated to museum collections. One of the events described in this book is the foundering of the *VASA* in 1628, another the loss of the *KRONAN* in the battle of 1676. Today the wrecks of both ships are the focus of major marine-archaeological projects in Sweden.



clergyman estate. He was very interested in the history of the navy. During his time in Karlskrona and his period of service as a ship's priest on naval ships during the 1720s, he made extensive notes on Swedish naval history, not least on the basis of archival material. It was on the basis of this work that he wrote the book mentioned above. He had started by collecting information about Swedish flag officers as well as ship's priests and master shipwrights. In addition he wrote notes on *Våra gamla svenskars och göthers forna sjöväsende, skepp, härnader, sjöstrider* (roughly: "the naval affairs, ships, warfare and naval battles of our old Swedes and Goths") – results of research on early naval history which were apparently not preserved (Naumann 1920).

The last part of his 1734 work is entitled *Några Märkeliga Händelser Som sig med Svenska Skepp Tildragit* (Some notable events which have happened with Swedish ships, Fig. 5). This section contains short, dramatic descriptions of naval battles in which Swedish naval ships had taken part, as well as of the dramatic foundering of Swedish naval ships during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To the latter belonged the sinking of the *SVANEN* in 1524, the *ELEFANTEN* in 1564, the *VASA* in 1628 and the *KRONAN* in 1676 (Cederlund 1994, p. 76f.).

These were the very same old naval shipwrecks which aroused interest and underwent salvage operations by navy divers and others more than one hundred years later in the mid nineteenth century, and thereafter well into the twentieth century. Since the introduction of the heavy diving suit in the navy around 1850, they have been the targets of diving and salvaging activities. The naval ship *VASA* was salvaged in 1961, representing one of the world's largest marine-archaeological projects. At the time of the writing of this text, the wreck of the *KRONAN* has been the subject of an extensive underwater investigation for more than twenty years.

## Works of naval history during the eighteenth century

Since the first half of the eighteenth century, throughout many generations within the Swedish navy, there has been a well-documented interest in naval heroes and their brave feats on board famous naval ships during naval campaigns and battles. This can be regarded as a tradition presumably passed on orally within the navy, but also expressed in print in different works of naval history. Since Bechstadius' work of 1734, many works have been written on the history of the Swedish navy. As mentioned above, they were written for its cadets and officers, but also for young people and interested individuals in general. Several of the later of these works were produced for use within the training programme at the Swedish Naval Academy.

These works constitute a more consciously structured type of history book than Bechstadius' work, while they address several of the same aspects discussed by the latter. They all project the interest of the navy in its own history and its historical role in society. A work of the latter part of the eighteenth century serves as an example: a treatise by the Finnish-Swedish scholar Jacob Tengström printed in 1783 and entitled *Historisk Avhandling om Svenska Sjömakten i äldre tider och i synnerhet under Konung Erich XIV* (Historical Treatise on Swedish Sea Power in early times and especially during the reign of King Erik XIV, Tengström 1783). In the introduction and in his overview of the development of the Swedish navy, Tengström emphasises the strong influence that the Vikings and their expansive naval expeditions had in the early period of Swedish naval history. He describes how numerous and influential the Vikings were in early Nordic society. He depicts them as important initiators of Swedish sea power and predecessors of naval heroes of later times. In his overview of the development of the Swedish navy he also emphasises the early importance of the ledung organisation, which he describes in detail, making reference to sixteenth-century historians and others.

Another example of naval history from the latter part of the eighteenth century is a book by a lieutenant of the Admiralty, Carl Gustaf Tornquist, *Utkast till Swenska Flottans Sjö-tåg* (Outline of the Expeditions of the Swedish Navy), printed in 1788. From the point of view of the present context it is an interesting work of naval history, printed during the first year of the Swedish-Russian war of 1788-1790. It provides an overview of the developments of naval warfare in which Sweden had been engaged until the latter part of the eighteenth century.

This kind of historical work was also published frequently during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. One of their characteristic features is the role played by the naval hero in the narratives contained in these works. During the early twentieth century, for example, a series of biographies was published under the title *Svenska Sjöhjältar* (Swedish Naval Heroes). It is thus evident that this projection of naval heroism was repeatedly presented in print in Sweden in the course of two hundred years, beginning with the Bechstadius work of 1734.

In the introductions to their works on naval history, the authors state that the Swedish naval heroes should be regarded as having been preceded by another category of hero, namely the Viking. In this assumption, it seems that we can see one link in a series of projections of naval heroes in Swedish historiography: In the early historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the role of the brave and courageous seaman was first assigned to the Goths. During the late eighteenth century this role was taken over by the Viking – a projection of the budding Romanticism of the time. In the works of naval history written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Vikings are seen as the precursors of heroic officers of the Swedish navy in famous naval battles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Cederlund 1994, p. 76f.).

## Ship history and shipbuilding history as an appreciation of the ship of early times

In the early works treating issues of naval history, the ship as such is also regarded with special interest. This interest was reflected in several ways, for example by the presentations of the ship as a special symbol in a historical context. The way in which Bechstadius – in his work of 1734 – describes the famous ships of the Swedish navy and their historical roles in naval battles is an apt example. It can be said that, in their descriptions, Bechstadius and many later historians defined the special symbolic roles of these naval ships in the human mind and imagination.

Another way of emphasising the ship and its role in history has been to stress its importance as a technically advanced tool, more advanced than many other technological manifestations of the respective periods. There is, in other words, an ongoing conception of the ship as an expression of advanced technology in the society and period to which it belonged. One example of this is perhaps the way Rudbeck presented, discussed and depicted the early Nordic ships of the old heroes in his work *Atlantis* (Eriksson 2001, p. 19f. and Fig. 4).

These conceptions of the ship as a historical phenomenon have accompanied the interest in maritime history through time. What is more, as can be seen by examining the twentieth-century manifestations of this aspect, they lost nothing of their popularity as time went on. It is a subject which has been frequently discussed in international seafaring and the naval history of the last two centuries.

Historical interest in ships comprised several facets. Another part of it was the history of shipbuilding, which is, for example, already the topic of several sections and engravings in Olaus Magnus' work of the sixteenth century. Rudbeck also treated it in various manners in his *Atlantis*. This interest is also frequently expressed during the eighteenth century. From the early nineteenth century on, it is evident that this form of historiography was becoming quite specialised in Sweden: Shipbuilding history has been written almost exclusively by naval technicians and shipbuilding engineers, occasionally also by engineers involved in civilian shipbuilding. This historical tradition can be traced into the late twentieth century in Sweden (Cederlund 1994, p. 60f.).

In the early works presented in this section of the text, one can discern a special ship-historical perspective which would continue to be present in the following centuries in marine- and ship-archaeological scientific expressions. This historical focus on ships can be regarded on the one hand as symbolic: Ships served as icons for different concepts or social groups. On the other hand, there is also a concern with ship technology and its role in the society in which it was developed and applied.

This is a theme in both historiography and, not least importantly, in the ship archaeology of later times, a theme which has not only been very evident but also of major significance within the evaluation system particularly of the latter discipline. An example illustrating both of these aspects is the appreciation of the Viking ship as both the tool of the Viking and as a highly advanced technical product of its period. This evaluation is so common and so clearly described that it is unnecessary to refer to any special source for it. In the form discussed here, it is already present in the seventeenth century and proves to be a long-standing historical tradition continuing up to the very present.

## Trading and seafaring history

During the eighteenth century another special historical interest emerged in Sweden, one which had not previously found expression as a special branch of history. This was the historical presentation of maritime trade and seafaring, a subject based on a range of different motives. One

motive was the general investigation of the history of trade and the economy by historians; in this context maritime trade and seafaring were also examined from a historical perspective.

An early example of this niche in historiography is a work by the land-surveyor Adolph Modeér, published in 1770 under the title *Försök till en allmän historia om Svea Rikes handel. 1 Afdelningen. Ifrån äldsta Tider, intil Drott. Ulricae Eleonorae Upphöjelse på Svenske Thronen* (Modeér 1770; Attempt of a General History of Swedish trade. 1<sup>st</sup> section. From the oldest times to the raising of Queen Ulricae Eleonorae to the throne). Modeér's work is clearly utilitarian and pragmatic. It is a historical work focusing on Swedish trade and economy, naturally thus also comprising seafaring and maritime trade. The author divided Swedish history in four periods: The first covers the period from the earliest establishment of the Swedish nation to the arrival of Oden (a real person according to the historical understanding of the time). The second period lasts until the introduction of Christianity; the third from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries, when the Protestant church succeeded the Catholic in Sweden. The fourth period lasts from then until the eighteenth century when the Swedish people regained a free government, as the authors stated it.

Several trains of thought are evident in this work, aspects again found in the historiography, general archaeology and marine archaeology of the twentieth century. In the first two sections, Modeér discusses the historical importance of the *ledung*. He was also very concerned with another subject in which there is still a lively interest today – early trading locations and the earliest towns. Modeér took up the subject of Björkö as an early trading location. In his work we can thus recognise various fields of historical interest revolving around the *ledung*, which has been a valuable subject for representatives of several disciplines of the humanities in the twentieth century – for scholars of general history and the history of law, cultural geographers, archaeologists and marine archaeologists. An interest in the urbanisation process and pre-urban societies is also apparent in Modeér's work of the eighteenth century, a subject which has also enjoyed keen interest within historical and archaeological fields in Sweden in later times.

In his discussion of the Medieval period, Modeér also investigated the role of the Hanseatic league in Sweden, another established theme of Swedish historiography as well as, later on, ship archaeology. In Northern Europe, the ship of the Hanseatic League – the cog – and its background in medieval seafaring was a focus of interest within ship history and archaeology throughout the twentieth century – and still is today.

## The history of economic politics and seafaring

There is a further explanation for the keen interest in pragmatic economic life in Modeér's work. During the eighteenth century, the open debate on economic politics became a lively aspect of political life. This development is mirrored in various kinds of texts, for example pamphlets with political argumentation. Historical reviews and arguments were also used liberally to support political reasoning. There are several examples, one being a speech held by one of the foremost ship owners and merchants in Stockholm in the mid eighteenth century, Claes Grill, before the Royal Academy of Science in 1749, under the title *Tal om Sjö-fartens nytta och förmån för riket, i synnerhet då han drives med hembygde och utur egne hamnar utrustade skepp* (Speech on the usefulness and advantage of seafaring for the nation, especially when performed with ships built at home and equipped in our own harbours). Grill devoted a large proportion of his speech to an overview of the history and development of maritime trade from the early sixteenth century to his own time. His focus was on well-organised seafaring with larger ships to foreign ports. He ended his talk with arguments as well as calculations illustrating how advantageous the development of the merchant marine would be to the nation (Grill 1749).

Stemming from a later point in time in the same century, another example of a political presentation on trade and seafaring basing its argumentation on Swedish seafaring are the writings of the clergyman and Member of Parliament Anders Chydenius (1729-1803; Heckscher 1929).

## Maritime history at the end of the Swedish Period of Liberty – C. R. Berch's treatise of 1766

On April 16, 1766 the Principal Assistance Secretary Carl Reinhold Berch held a lecture before the Royal Academy of Sciences under the title *Afhandling om Nordiska folkets fordna Sjöväsende, så väl til Handel, som Örlog* (Treatise on the Nordic Peoples' Maritime Life in the Past, as well on Trade and Naval Matters, Berch 1766).

Carl Reinhold Berch (1706-1777) belonged to the Swedish scholarly elite of his time. He was employed as director of the Antiquity Archives. He was a numismatic scholar who, by the time of the presentation, had also established himself as a historian. In the latter capacity he held a critical view on the historical school of Olof Rudbeck and the interpretation of history Rudbeck presented (see above). Berch was a reputed scholar both nationally and internationally, being a member not only of the Swedish Royal Academy of History and Antiquities and the Royal Society of Science in Uppsala, but also of the Antiquarian Society in London (Schück 1923).

Berch's treatise is an expression of interest in maritime history at the end of the Swedish Period of Liberty. The way in which he structures this subject is of interest with regard both to previous historiography – general as well as maritime – and to the manner in which the subject developed in later times. In fact, it is also of great importance for understanding the motives behind marine archaeology and ship archaeology during the twentieth century and today.

Berch applies an evolutionary perspective, beginning with a discussion on the oldest forms of sea travel. He advances the theory that oars and rowing techniques were inspired by the broad feet and swimming techniques of sea birds. As the origin of the sail he cites leaf-bearing branches erected in pre-historical vessels. He proposes that this primitive method was later replaced by the use of hides and fine furs as sails.

Berch explains that it was the striving for wealth, power and access to foreign shores that motivated the building of larger ships in early times. He mentions, for example, that these ambitions were what led to the discovery of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, as well as Iceland. According to Berch, Norwegian seafarers even reached North America – called Vinland – on the strength of these aspirations.

As a cause for naval warfare in these early times, he mentions piracy and naval expeditions undertaken with the intention of invading foreign shores. He states that Vikings were seen at sea in as early as the seventh century. He describes the expansion of Viking rule, the growth of their power and recklessness, and the manner in which different countries met their assaults. He compares the Vikings with the Barbary pirates of his own time, the latter being a force representing a considerable threat to merchant ships and their crews.

He cites Saxo on the execution and effects of Viking expeditions, and how defence against them was organised. He describes how Vikings marauded villages in the Vendic areas. In this description he seems to take a critical rather than a panegyric stance on the phenomenon of the Vikings. It is interesting to compare this approach with the praise of the Viking by authors of the Romantic period a generation later, for example by Esaias Tegnér and Erik Gustaf Geijer, of whom the latter was also a historian. Berch emphasises the large number of ships said to have been built for Viking expeditions. He also describes the organisation of the *ledung* and the structure of land ownership upon which it was based.



## Historical ideas evident in Berch's work and underlying present-day ship archaeology

Berch describes the different early ship types known in his day, their structure, shipyards, shipbuilders, and early shipbuilding techniques. Among other things he mentions how vessels of the Finnish type called *Scuta* were joined together with sinews and withies, referring as well to the Russian "*lojdas*" of the seventeenth century as the descendants of the former. He discusses the different components and areas on board a vessel of the past, describing its various details, weapons, naval battle techniques, the places of the oarsmen and the rowing technique, the rigging, the way the sails were handled and their colour. He used early Nordic literary sources as well as works by historians such as Olaus Magnus, Olof Rudbeck and Peringskiöld.

He then carries out an interesting survey of different early ship types and their interpretations by different authors. He also focuses on known names of special ships in the old times. He continues his work with a discussion of early navigation and the handling of ships, weather conditions at sea, signal systems and how the ships were maintained during the winter. He also goes into the inland-shipping-related practice of pulling vessels over land.

Carl Reinhold Berch's treatise can be regarded as the first presentation of general maritime history in the Swedish language. During the preceding centuries, authors had described the Nordic maritime culture in a historic perspective, then as a facet in the presentation of national history, and as part of a general picture of Nordic or Swedish society and its background. Berch defines a specific historical sphere and its contents in his treatise, a sphere which has retained its territory and boundaries to the present. There is ample evidence of the presence of the same themes in later maritime history and in marine and ship archaeological contexts.

Thirty years before Berch's presentation, the clergyman and naval historian Bechstadius ended his work (Bechstadius 1734, discussed above) with tales of famous naval battles, events and ships of the Swedish navy. Berch concluded his treatise on early maritime history with a description of a Nordic naval battle, the one at Svolder, the famous naval battle between Nordic Vikings as told in the Icelandic Saga.

## The concept of "Sjöhistoria" ("Sea History")

During the second half of the eighteenth century a special term came into use in Swedish to define the interest in maritime history, namely "*Sjöhistoria*." This translates literally as "sea history" and can be understood as the "history of matters related to the sea." The German synonym for "*Sjöhistoria*" is the term "*Schiffahrtsgeschichte*."

Linguistically, the term "*Sjöhistoria*" is related to several other Swedish words with the same prefix, such as "*Sjömakt*" (naval power), "*Sjöintresse*" (interest in maritime life and matters) and "*Sjöväsen*" (naval organisation or system).

The term "*Sjöhistoria*" is used by authors in the latter part of the eighteenth century to define the interest in and presentation of the history of the navy in particular and of the history of seafaring in general: In his speech on Swedish naval power, held before the Royal Academy of Sciences on June 11, 1766 (the same year as Berch's presentation there) the General and Commander of the Swedish Galley Fleet, August Ehrenswärd, states his wish to see the establishment of subjects for a Swedish sea history (*Svensk Sjöhistoria*). This he defines as the history of both seafaring and naval activities (Ehrenswärd 1767, p. 4). Another example of the use of the term "*Sjöhistoria*" is that by the lieutenant of the Admiralty Carl Gustaf Tornquist, who published a historical work in 1788 on the naval expeditions of the Swedish navy. In the introduction he explains that a complete Swedish "*Sjöhistoria*" was still lacking, something that other nations had developed by that time. Roughly translated into English, he stated that: "Patrimony still

lacks a work in this field, although we – like other nations – can show ourselves as good naval heroes [*Sjö-Hjältar*] who deserve the homage of later generations.” He goes on to say that his work is not to be viewed as a “*Sjöhistoria*,” because – as he humbly confesses – a much broader knowledge than his own would be required for a work of that kind. His aim was limited to the description of the expeditions and arming of the Swedish navy in the old days (Tornquist 1788).

The term “*Sjöhistoria*” was also in use during the nineteenth century, and became a more established term in Swedish during the twentieth century, referring primarily to naval, seafaring and shipbuilding history, but also to related historical fields. Conceptually it can be compared with what is referred to in English as “maritime history.” With regard to the establishment of the term “*Sjöhistoria*,” it is interesting to note that, following some discussion of alternatives in the 1930s, it was chosen as the essential part of the name of the Swedish National Maritime Museum, founded at that time. The institution was given the name “*Sjöhistoriska Museet*,” later changed to “*Statens Sjöhistoriska Museum*.”

## Early marine finds in the context of contemporary ideas

If we return now to the early archaeological finds described in the introduction to this paper, objects discovered in inundated or underwater environments or some location connecting them to maritime or naval history, we see that not one of them was recognised or discussed by coincidence. On the contrary, we find that the observations and comments made on them were aspects of distinctly discernible streams of ideas of the time – and in several cases also of today:

The Bilströmmen finds of Stone-Age and Bronze-Age axes were interpreted at the time of their excavation as being connected to a semi-historical, semi-mythical tale of a battle in early Nordic history, and to heroic warriors on their way to participating in the same. It is of interest to recognise that this kind of archaeological find, i.e. tools and other items of flint, stone, antler or bone found in maritime, often coastal, environments was perhaps the first group of archaeological artefacts to be subjected to systematic, archaeological study in Scandinavia. As concerns the Swedish contributions to the development of this discipline, one might cite the research and publications of Sven Nilsson which began to appear about three decades after the presentation of the Bilströmmen finds in *Iduna* (see Regnell 1983, p. 24f.). In Denmark, a similar development commenced in the same period. The studies by Nilsson lead us further back in time as they represent the commencement of studies particularly of Mesolithic but also of Neolithic archaeology, and of coastal (hunting and fishing) habitation sites. These studies also comprise one on finds of submerged Stone-Age settlements in Southern Scandinavia, in both Sweden and Denmark. In the latter country, the marine-archaeological studies of this kind of material developed especially in the course of the twentieth century.

The Bilströmmen finds may indicate an interesting aspect which has perhaps not yet received adequate scholarly attention, namely the possibility of finding and investigating archaeological sites of great age in the inland waters of the Scandinavian peninsula, an area unusually rich in lakes, streams and rivers – particularly in view of the continuous sinking of the land which has been in progress since the last Ice Age, inundating certain parts of earlier shore areas there.

As discussed above, the engineer Eric Nordevall discussed finds of ships and anchors at the former sound at Södertälje between the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren in a paper of 1832. There seems to be no doubt about the fact that his remarks, through brief, nevertheless clearly indicate a specific personal interest in the ship finds. His interest revolves among other things around the fact that one of the ships had a figurehead, an element recognised as something particularly worthy of attention. The fact that the two Iron-Age anchors from the Södertälje site

were preserved (as the only remnants of ships or ship equipment) also indicates an interest in the finds and their archaeological value. The wooden parts of these ships are very likely to have smouldered due to dehydration and cell collapse after having been uncovered and exposed to the sun and air.

One may conclude that the excavation of and interest in the Södertälje ship finds, objects possibly dating from the Late Iron Age, are expressions of an early-nineteenth-century interest in both general archaeology and early naval and ship history. Those of the archaeological finds of Iron-Age ships in Scandinavia which it was possible to preserve for posterity were not excavated and treated as valuable objects until the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the Nydam ships of the Roman Iron Age, found at the border between Denmark and Germany in the 1860s. At the same time and a couple of decades later, the first finds were made of what were called "Viking ships," the ones at Tune and Gokstad in southern Norway.

As has been shown in this paper, interest in ships of early times has been constant since at least the seventeenth century. Since that time, Swedish historical studies have also been directed towards the early naval organisation, the *ledung*, and the ships belonging to it. It is to be noted that this interest in early ship types and naval organisation is also a clearly discernible aspect of early national historiography as well as of the ship archaeology of our time.

Hyltén-Cavallius' presentation and interpretation of finds of log boats and of primitive craft in his ethnological publication of 1868 is also an expression of a "tradition" in historiography, already apparent in Olaus Magnus' work *Historia om de Nordiska Folken*. The latter associated this kind of vessel with conceptions of trolls as creatures of historical reality, an element of interpretation used seriously in early archaeology, as for example by Sven Nilsson in his interpretation of archaeological material. The interest in primitive craft such as log boats also continued and expanded in later times. It has led to the collection of many more such finds, not least in local museum collections – as expressions of interest in the most primitive sort of water transportation (see for example Cederlund 1980). The study of this subject in Scandinavia has received its own niche in ship-archaeological research – being represented there by the recording and analysis of log boat finds of early dates (see for example Rieck & Crumlin-Pedersen 1988, p. 11f.).

The fourth example of early finds of a maritime character, the keel piece of the naval ship GÖTHA, expresses a special tradition in the world of ideas in the early nineteenth century, as did the many objects later salvaged from wrecks of naval ships at greater depths than the GÖTHA, which lay at the shore near master shipwright Pettersson's shipyard in Karlskrona. The latter's donation to the academy in Lund of a piece of the ship's keel was indicative of a historical interest in the role played by this ship in the navy. As is shown in early publications on naval history, there was a strong association with the conceptions of naval heroes who took part in famous battles on board famous war ships, and also with tales of the dramatic foundering of such ships in Swedish naval history. It was a historical literature and a historical tradition originally developed to raise the morale and fighting spirit and the awareness of naval values within the personnel, presumably especially among the cadets, but possibly also among the officers and sailors.

This historical tradition, originally limited to the navy, later successively spread throughout society. This development is evident in the frequent publishing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of popular naval history books, directed towards a general public, especially young people. Other publications of the same character were usually based on conservative political values, often expressed in connection with the navy's political role in society at the time.

Beginning in the mid nineteenth century, when the navy as well as private salvage companies acquired the newly invented heavy diving suit, these various publishing activities were accompanied by frequent salvage operations on the wrecks of old naval ships. The latter were motivated

in part by historical interest in the ships and their wrecks as well as in the finds salvaged. An operation of this kind was performed on the wreck of the RIKSÄPPLET in the Stockholm Archipelago in as early as the mid nineteenth century, leading to the above-mentioned retrieval of an anchor and guns in the 1860s.

The salvage of the seventeenth-century naval ship VASA in Stockholm Harbour in 1961 and the underwater archaeological excavation of the wreck of the naval ship KRONAN, sunk in battle in 1676 to the east of the island of Öland – an operation which has been in progress since 1980 – can be regarded as highlights in this development (Cederlund 1994, p. 53f.).

Early depictions of Swedish naval history revolved around images of Swedish naval heroes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an approach clearly evident in the books published on this theme until the first half of the twentieth century. Behind these heroes, as their predecessors and a kind of early naval hero in Swedish history, the image of the Vikings on their Viking ships was also developed (Cederlund 1998, p. 16).

There is also a special connection to be observed in this case: The master shipwright Carl Daniel Pettersson, the donator of part of the GÖTHA's keel and former pupil of the shipbuilder and admiral Fredrik Henrik af Chapman, a key figure in later Swedish shipbuilding history, had possessed a strong interest in historical matters and old times, and especially in the history of shipbuilding, throughout his life. This was pointed out by a representative of the next generation of shipbuilding engineers in the Swedish navy, C.A. Lindvall, as Pettersson was active in both naval and civilian shipbuilding in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Lindvall also expressed the same historical interests in several ways, including his recording and publishing of the remains of an old naval shipwreck dug up in Stockholm in the 1870s.

Both these shipbuilders were early representatives of a special historical tradition within Swedish naval history, namely that of shipbuilding history. This was upheld for several generations and down to the very present by one group only, namely by shipbuilding engineers and technicians, particularly those belonging to the navy (Cederlund 1994, p. 60f.).

This historical perspective, the interest in shipbuilding history, is also an essential factor in the development of ship archaeology in the Scandinavian countries. This discipline accounts for the professional background of a considerable number of those active in this field, often persons in high-ranking positions. Of the many important scholars in this field, I would like to mention two here by name – one from Norway and one from Sweden – to exemplify this circumstance: the Norwegian shipbuilding engineer Fredrik Johannesen, active during the first half of the twentieth century in the Nordic countries particularly in the reconstruction of shipwrecks of the Iron Age and the medieval period, and the Swedish naval shipbuilding engineer Gustaf Halldin, involved especially with shipbuilding history, but also with several wreck investigations during the same period.

#### Note:

The subject treated in this paper is a summary of parts of a coming monograph with the title *Marine archaeology in society and research. A study of the Swedish development*, carried out by the author as a research project at Södertörns Högskola (University College).

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## Von Olaus Magnus bis Carl Reinhold Berch. Zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Hintergründen schwedischer Meeres- und Schiffsarchäologie

### Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Beitrag gibt einen Überblick über die in der frühen schwedischen Geschichtsschreibung seit der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts herrschenden Vorstellungen, deren Blickwinkel verrät, in welcher Weise man sich Schiffen sowie dem Leben auf und in der See zu früheren Zeiten annäherte. Es wird deutlich, daß sich gewisse historische Anschauungen durch die



Jahrhunderte hindurchziehen, während andere ihr Erscheinungsbild wandelten, ohne jedoch ihre Kernaussage zu verändern.

Wann immer seit Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts schiffahrtsbezogene archäologische Funde oder Funde an unterseeischen bzw. überfluteten Plätzen als solche erkannt und dokumentiert werden, ist das auf sie bezogene Interesse motiviert durch lange bestehende historische Vorstellungen zur gesellschaftlichen Bedeutung des maritimen Aspekts. In Teilen decken sich diese mit den Vorstellungen, die um die Archäologie im allgemeinen kreisen, in anderen Fällen haben sie eine ganz besondere Ausprägung.

Der Beitrag zeigt, daß die Ideen früherer Jahrhunderte auch heute noch sehr lebendig sein können, und blickt auf einige Beispiele archäologischer Funde an überschwemmten Orten bzw. Schiffsfunde des 19. Jahrhunderts zurück und zeichnet frühere Interpretationen meeres- und schiffsarchäologischen Fundmaterials in der um die schwedische und nordische Geschichtsschreibung kreisenden Geistesgeschichte seit dem 16. Jahrhundert nach.

Anliegen des Beitrags ist es, daran zu erinnern, daß es für die Interpretationen und Schlüsse der heutigen Meeres- und Schiffsarchäologie wichtig ist, deren schon lange bestehende, zugrundeliegende Anschauungen zu verstehen, denn sie spielen für diese eine weitaus größere Rolle als man zunächst glauben mag.

## D'Olaus Magnus à Carl Reinhold Berch. L'archéologie maritime et navale suédoise au travers des différentes visions de l'histoire

### Résumé

L'article présent donne un aperçu des idées régnant depuis la première moitié du 16<sup>ème</sup> siècle dans l'historiographie suédoise ancienne, révélant ainsi la façon dont s'effectuait à l'époque l'approche des navires, de la vie sur et dans la mer. Il devient évident que certaines visions de l'histoire se répercutent à travers les siècles, tandis que d'autres changent d'apparence, sans pour autant rien modifier à l'essentiel de leur message.

Depuis le début du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, dès que des découvertes archéologiques liées à la navigation, ou des trouvailles faites à des endroits immergés ou inondés, furent reconnues en tant que telles et documentées, l'intérêt qu'elles suscitaient provenait directement des concepts historiques existants sur la signification sociale de l'aspect maritime. Celles-ci se recoupent en partie avec les idées qui tournaient autour de l'archéologie, dans d'autres cas, elles ont une empreinte particulière.

L'article montre que les idées des siècles précédents peuvent être aujourd'hui encore très vivantes, et passe en revue quelques exemples de découvertes archéologiques effectuées au 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, soit à des endroits inondés, soit des découvertes d'embarcations. Il retrace d'anciennes interprétations de matériel obtenu sur des fouilles, marines ou navales, qui avaient cours depuis le 16<sup>ème</sup> siècle, et qui tournaient autour de l'historiographie suédoise et nordique.

Le but de l'article est de rappeler que pour les interprétations et les conclusions de l'archéologie maritime et navale d'aujourd'hui, il est important de comprendre ces visions qui existent depuis longtemps et qui sont à leur base, car elles jouent un rôle bien plus grand que l'on ne pourrait croire à première vue.